



Canada geese swimming through ice floes on the Concord River by Cherrie Corey

Introduction

Open space and recreation are priority issues for Concord residents. This plan integrates community input, research, and the work in the previous *Open Space and Recreation Plans*, to identify current priority issues in town affecting open space and recreation planning. The plan highlights specific achievable goals and action items that can be carried out in the coming seven years to enhance Concord's natural and recreational resources.

A) Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this document is to establish priorities and recommend future actions that will help with the cultivation and management of open space and recreation resources. Development pressure, high land costs, the need for low-income housing, and the various consequences of climate change all underscore the need to carefully plan for the future and protect resources to ensure the continued health and vitality of Concord's natural resources and recreational opportunities. This report contains a detailed inventory of Concord's natural, cultural, and recreational resources. It analyzes the major patterns of those resources within the Town and the region, and suggests ways to enhance their preservation and management. Understanding both the detail and the larger patterns is critical to creating a plan for the future. This plan concludes with specific actions to achieve these goals.

The report builds on the foundation of plans drafted in 1977, 1985, 1992, and especially, the 2004 Open Space and Recreation Plan. Challenges identified in these earlier documents, as well as more recent initiatives such as sustainability principles adopted by the Town in 2011, helped inform the current analysis process, which determined that careful planning for the future of the Town's resources must also include: food and water security (e.g., supply of water and food for Concord residents), and climate adaptation (both mitigation of and adaptation to through implementation of sustainable land

management practices). While the full effects of these new challenges may not be directly felt by residents within the next seven years, beginning to plan now for future changes will help to ensure that the Town is better prepared to meet them. This report sets specific, achievable goals, including prioritized areas to protect, improved trail connectivity of recreational resources, and enhanced watershed protection.

B) Planning Process and Public Participation

The current planning process was begun in January 2013. Under the guidance of the Division of Natural Resources staff, a committee was formed to support the work of a Conway School graduate student team, the consultants on the project. The Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Committee included members from the Board of Selectmen, Planning Division, Natural Resources Commission, Recreation Department, Public Health Division, Community Preservation Committee, West Concord Advisory Committee, and community organizations such as the Concord Land Conservation Trust, as well as citizens at large. The committee held several working meetings, two community meetings, and several informal discussions. The Conway team developed a draft that drew heavily from the 2004 OSRP and sent it to committee members for review. The team completed GIS mapping and analysis. The team met with personnel from Concord's Department of Public Works, Planning Division, Division of Natural Resources, Recreation Department, His-

torical Commission members, Concord Climate Action Network leadership, Concord Land Conservation Trust members, and various experts, including Richard T.T. Forman, co-chair of the 2004 OSRP committee. Town records and additional reports were used extensively.

All community meetings were public meetings held in universally accessible locations, with advance town notices appropriately posted, including newspaper articles and website postings. Members of the public were invited to attend. An online survey was distributed to town members, with hard copies available at all town offices. Public notification of the survey included newspaper articles in various papers widely distributed in town, website postings, and multiple mass emails. There were 453 responses. Sections 6, 7, and 10 of this report summarize comments received at the community meetings, public hearings, and from the survey.

gional patterns and processes, providing an important perspective and a framework for town-wide patterns. This 2015 plan builds on and updates the previously established Open Space Framework.

The framework clearly identifies the large natural and agricultural areas as the highest priority for open space protection in Concord because they protect biodiversity, increase food security, and conserve the character of the town. Also of high priority are the major water-protection and wildlife corridors that connect the large patches of open space. Several core parcels within large natural and agricultural areas, as well as in major water-protection and wildlife corridors, remain unprotected.

The town's network of large open space areas and major corridors are part of a larger structure of regional landscape patterns. This highlights

“Every committee in town and every action approved should follow the OSRP; the question should be asked in every approval process.” – Concord Resident

This plan was prepared following the guidelines established by the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services for the preparation of state-approved open space and recreation master plans.

C) Enhanced Outreach and Public Participation

A wealthy suburban community, Concord is not currently home to any environmental justice populations. However, the town continues to make every effort to maintain and expand affordable housing stock, above the requirements set forth by the State.

D) The Open Space Framework

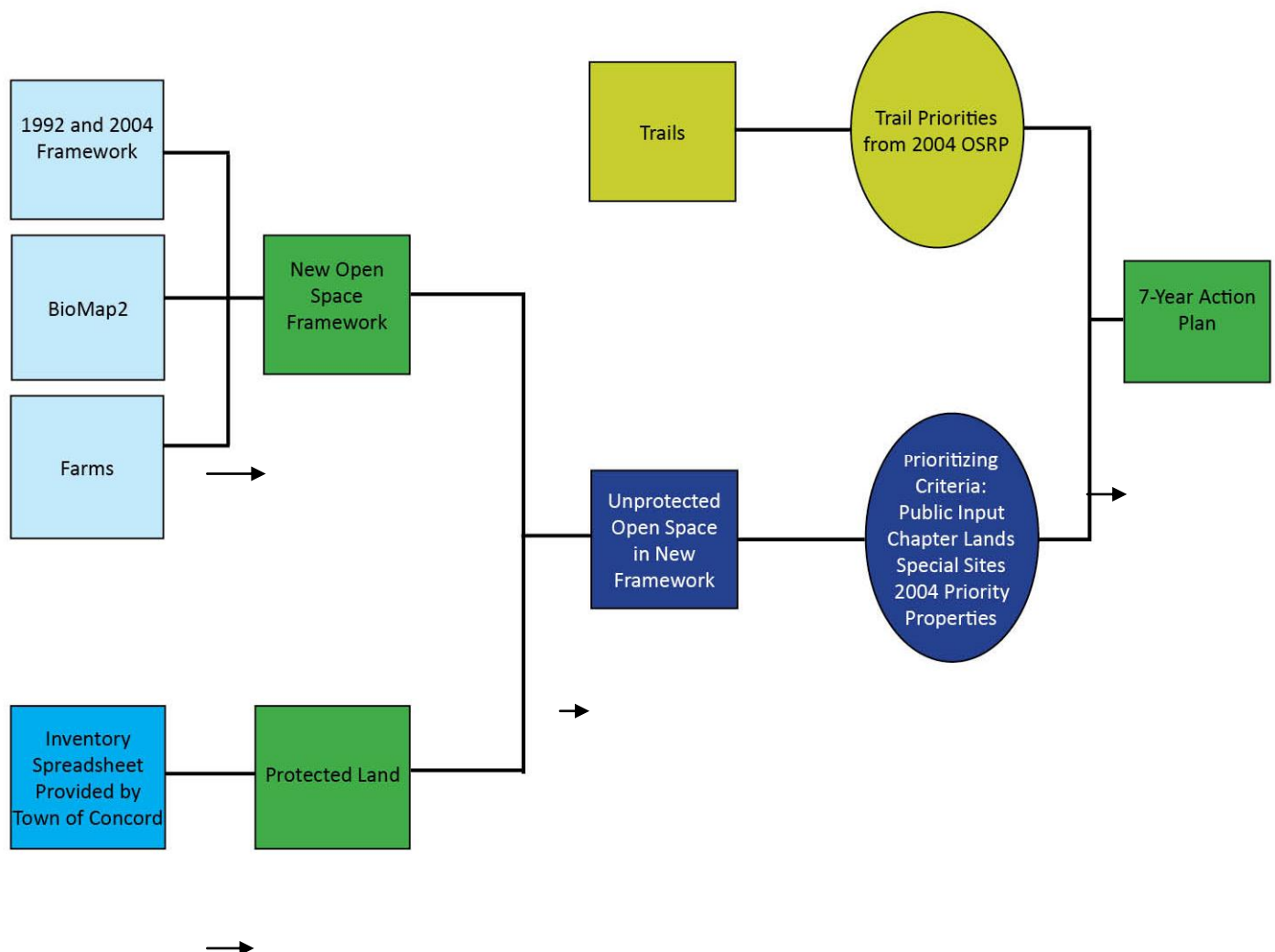
The Open Space Framework (see Open Space Framework Map), developed as the backbone of Concord's 1992 and 2004 *Open Space and Recreation Plans*, emphasizes the importance of seeing the big picture while also taking into account the finer details of the landscape. The 2004 *Open Space and Recreation Plan* added to the understanding of both scales. Examining the region around Concord identified broader re-

the significance of several of these patches and corridors due to their size, integrity, and potential as species migration routes. In addition to protection, these priority resources should be managed based on planning goals for the network as a whole. Farming, for example, may be difficult in suburbs, yet the town is well served by maintaining large agricultural areas and facilitating farming. A similar process needs to be formalized to accelerate stewardship of their resources in neighborhoods across the entire town.

In short, the Open Space Framework is a particularly effective tool for analyzing, understanding, and setting land protection priorities for open space resources. Through this lens, the recommendations in Section 9 address challenges and opportunities in the town today. By keeping up-to-date on changing land use and open space patterns and processes across the region, this approach can continue to inform decision-making well into the future.

Logic Model Showing Analysis Steps for 7-Year Action Plan

The 7-year action plan presented in Section 9 is based on the analyses presented in the following sections and follows the logic model shown below.



2015 Open Space Framework

The 1992 and 2004 *Open Space and Recreation Plans* established an objective and ecologically-based approach called the Open Space Framework (OSRP 1992, 2004). The town as a whole was examined to identify both overall land use patterns and specific sites of special interest. Two major town-wide landscape types, which are further broken down into constituent parts, combine to create an overall pattern: **Large Intact Areas** (“patches”) and **Major Corridors**. In addition, **Special Sites** are scattered across the town. These are small, but uncommon or important open spaces, such as rare species habitat or scenic views. The 2015 Open Space framework expands the natural areas to include Biomap2 core habitat, expands the agricultural areas to include adjacent Chapter 61A land, and adds an additional built area.

Three types of **Large Areas** with similar characteristics and function are present in Concord:

- Natural-vegetation areas
- Agricultural areas
- Built areas

Also three types of **Major Corridors** are present, namely those for:

- Wildlife movement
- Water protection
- Human use

For more information on the framework, see *Section 5*.

Large Agricultural Areas:

- A1. Nine Acre Corner
- A2. Lexington Road
- A3. Monument Street
- A4. Williams Road / Sudbury Road / Route 2
- A5. Reformatory Farms / Barrett’s Mill Road

Large Natural Areas:

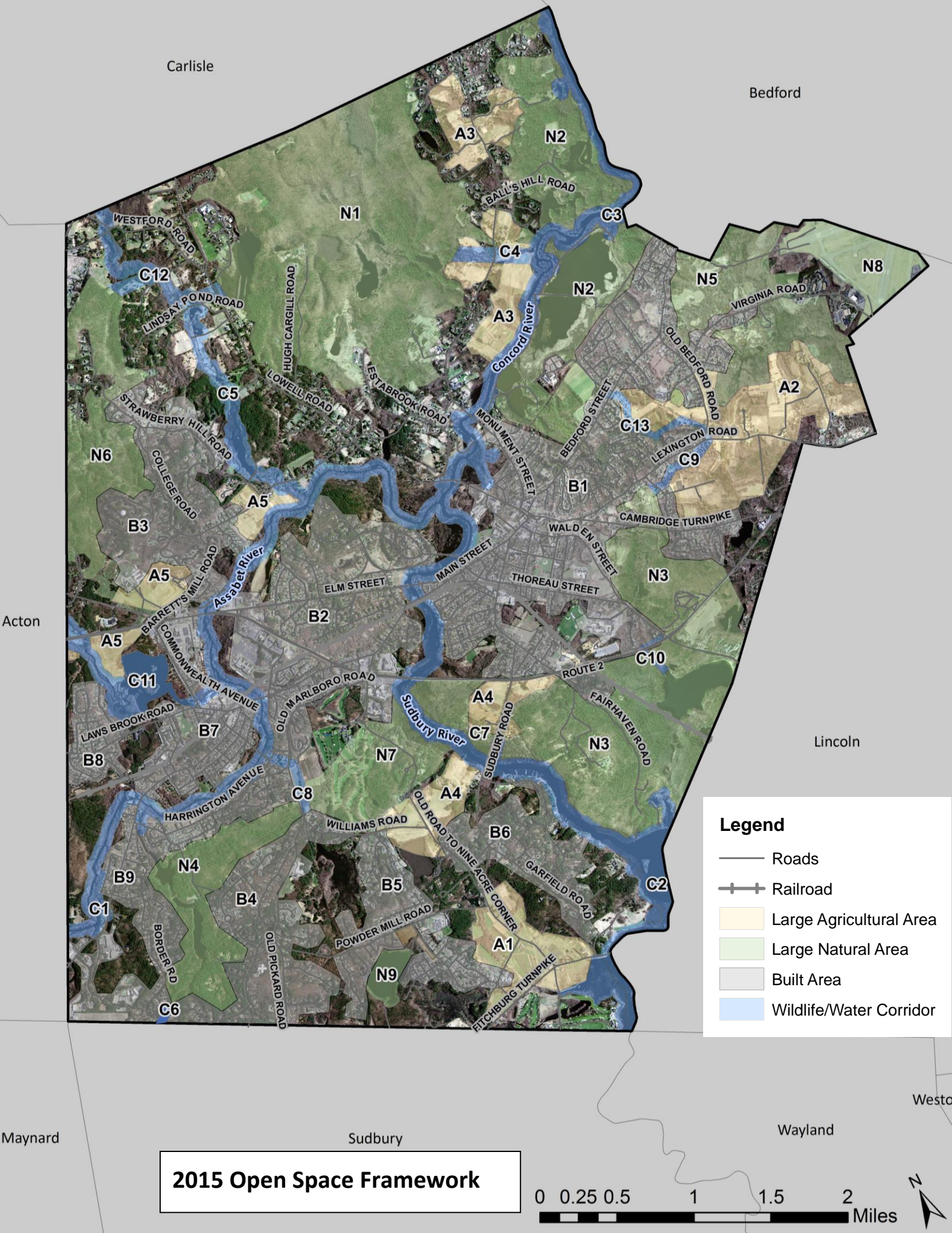
- N1. Estabrook Woods Area
- N2. Great Meadows / Ball’s Hill Area
- N3. Walden Woods / Town Forest
- N4. Second Division Brook Area
- N5. Virginia Road Woods
- N6. Annursnac Hill / Strawberry Hill Road
- N7. Jennie Dugan Kames
- N8. Hanscom
- N9. White Pond

Large Built Areas:

- B1. Concord Center / Bedford Street
- B2. West Concord / Elm Street
- B3. Annursnac Hill / Barrett’s Mill Road
- B4. Peabody / Sanborn Schools
- B5. White Pond Area
- B6. Garfield Road
- B7. Thoreau School
- B8. Hillside Ave / Sorrel Road
- B9. Second Division Brook

Major Wildlife and Water-protection Corridors:

- C1. Assabet River
- C2. Sudbury River
- C3. Concord River
- C4. Saw Mill Brook
- C5. Spencer Brook
- C6. Second Division Brook
- C7. Jennie Dugan Brook
- C8. Second Division Brook / Jennie Dugan Kames to Assabet River
- C9. Virginia Road Woods Area to Walden Woods / Town Forest
- C10. Town Forest to Walden Reservation via railroad underpass and school land
- C11. Nashoba Brook / Warner’s Pond
- C12. Annursnac Hill / Strawberry Hill Road Area to Estabrook Woods Area
- C13. Virginia Road Woods to Great Meadows / Ball’s Hill Area



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